

but amidst those stories of horror lurks absolutely no seething need for revenge. They know full well that there is no time or place for revenge and recrimination. They live with the horror of yesterday and look to the future with optimism and eternal thanks for the help and support of the American people in helping them gain their total freedom. Thank you and welcome are part of every conversation. From Harbor Gate to Mosul to Tikrit to Baghdad back to Tikrit, with a honored stop at Diyala, to Mosul and then finally back to Erbil I have been simultaneously overwhelmed, stunned and awe struck by the extraordinary professionalism of every soldier I personally meet and those I only had the opportunity to observe without them ever knowing that I was watching. I learned of an organization that cares deeply, profoundly and personally for the well being of every individual within its ranks, while every individual member is willing to sacrifice their very being for every other individual member. That is why they go about what they call their job but what I refer to as their passion with a clarity of purpose that humbles you to your knees. In this organization everyone and I mean everyone knows that they are first and foremost a soldier who is fully trained and prepared to go into battle should the need occur but they likewise perform a multitude of vast ranging tasks that they have been highly trained for to highest possible professional standards. They completely understand their specific task and perform it superbly for they know full well that every individual soldier is equal in their value and importance to the successful completion of the mission.

The words COMPLEXITY and PROFESSIONALISM scream at you as you begin to understand all that is going on all about you. From the formation of a huge truck convoy, to the logistical requirements of a division, to the combat readiness of squadrons of Blackhawks to the coordination of the divergent aspects of public affairs one can not help but be stunned the complexity of our effort in Iraq and most importantly the professionalism in which the effort is carried out.

Accompanying that professionalism is the humanity of these Soldiers who have sacrificed so much for us and of which we sadly know so little. Their stories should be told and retold for they are the heroes that we should be emulating. In Baghdad I was fortunate to be allowed to stay in visitors quarters and was escorted by a National Guard Unit from Kentucky. I like most people had a somewhat diminished view of the National Guard. I got to know these individuals quite well and dramatically experienced that same level of professionalism first hand. I was learning the history of the county in Kentucky where my escort was from when a fire fight broke out across the lake. After a number of minutes of continuous fighting the Sgt's unit was notified that they would be joining the fight. In an instant the calm of the mess was transformed as these soldiers prepared for combat. Three vehicles and 15 men would be heading out to the streets of Baghdad. Everyone knew their job precisely. The guns were mounted as the computers were spun up. Communications were checked and every individual soldier completed their own mental checklist. As if in a heart beat I watched as men did what I initially thought was a transformation from escort to Soldier but what I watched was in fact was a Soldier performing one job and then another, both to the highest professional standards.

Over the next few weeks Americans will argue over and eventually vote for their choice as to who is going to get the title of "AMERICAN IDOL". They will watch transfixed as young athletes perform at the highest possible level to gain the title of Na-

tional Champion of College Basketball. Millions will flock to the baseball stadiums of America to watch in awe as their teams begin their long journey to be named as The World Champions of Baseball. All that should pale before your eyes for those Wondrous Warriors who seek not the accolades but unselfishly protect your very freedoms have already earned the right to be crowned as World and National Champions and are in fact "THE TRUE AMERICAN IDOLS" for everyday they place their lives on the line for us.

"CONGRATULATING THE NATIONAL JROTC MIDDLE SCHOOL CHAMPIONS OF T.C. MARSH JUNIOR HIGH"

HON. PETE SESSIONS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 16, 2007

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to proudly recognize T.C. Marsh Junior High School as the home to the National Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) Middle School Champions. Thirty-five of the school's 217 unit members qualified for the competition which was held on March 31 in Dallas. Under the guidance of teacher David Bates, the students competed against units from all over the country. Bates served for the army as a corporal in the First Calvary. As a former Florida Gator football player, Bates coaches W.T. White varsity softball and football teams and until this year, coached 8th grade football, basketball and baseball at T. C. Marsh. I congratulate David Bates and the students of T.C. Marsh Junior High School for their well-deserved victory and wish them all the best in future endeavors.

HONORING HISPANIC VETERANS OF WORLD WAR II

HON. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 16, 2007

Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California. Madam Speaker, I proudly join my colleagues today to pay tribute to the contributions of Latinos who served in our Armed Forces during World War II. As we were painfully reminded by the complete omission of Hispanics from a PBS documentary on World War II, the important contributions of Latinos, native born, as well as immigrants, are too often overlooked and forgotten.

From the American Revolution, a victory that established our Nation; to the Civil War, a victory that preserved our Nation; to the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Hispanics have played an instrumental role.

From Hispanic business owners to day laborers to the growing number of Hispanics in executive level positions, Hispanics are ingrained in the fabric of our strong Nation. As the largest and fastest growing minority in the United States, Hispanic participation in all segments of society is not only essential but apparent. It should not be surprising, then, that Hispanics also serve our nation in one of its most patriotic duties—the heroic defense of our country.

During World War II, Hispanics served in greater proportions than any other minority in the U.S. Armed Forces with the number of Hispanics serving likely peaking at well over 400,000. Although proper record keeping of Hispanics in the armed forces was not kept until after World War II, we have a multitude of accounts of Hispanic participation. One famous example is Company E of the 141st Regiment of the 36th Texas Infantry Division, which was made up entirely of Spanish-speaking Americans. For their notable service they were awarded 1,685 Bronze Stars, 492 Silver Stars, 31 Distinguished Service Crosses, 12 Legends of Merit, and 11 Soldier's Medals.

One individual example is Staff Sergeant Ysmael R. Villegas. A California native, he served in the United States Army during World War II. At the Battle of Luzon in the Philippines, he stepped up to lead his squad in a counterattack of the enemy and single-handedly cleared five installations of heavy machineguns. Upon taking the sixth and final area of firing, and at only twenty-one years old, Staff Sergeant Villegas was killed in action. For his bravery, President Harry Truman posthumously awarded him the Medal of Honor.

There are countless stories of heroism like Staff Sergeant Villegas'. Hispanics disproportionately earned more Medals of Honor in the 20th Century than any other major subgroup. From the Civil War to the Vietnam War, there have been thirty-nine Hispanic Americans who have received the Medal of Honor. Twenty-two of them sacrificed their lives in combat in service to the United States Navy, Army, and Marines.

According to the latest Census, there are over 1.1 million living Hispanic veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. And this number is expanding. Since November 2006, 25,300 Hispanics have been deployed for service. According to the Department of Defense, Hispanics have endured the most deaths for a minority group in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. Our country honors their service as well as those who have served in the past.

I encourage all Americans to take the opportunity to recognize and continue to learn about the role Hispanics played in World War II and throughout our nation's history. It is an integral part of the American story. Without these contributions and sacrifices, America would not be what it is today.

TRIBUTE TO MRS. CINDY CARLSON

HON. PETER J. VISCLOSKY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, April 16, 2007

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I stand before you today to honor Mrs. Cindy Carlson upon her retirement from her position as Secretary for Sub-District 5, District 7 of the United Steelworkers. I have known Cindy for many years, and she is one of the most involved citizens I have ever known, especially when it comes to her service to the United Steelworkers. Cindy has been a member of the staff at District 7 for an astonishing 31 years, and her contributions to the organization are immeasurable. For her efforts and many contributions to Sub-District 5,